How often, toward the end of life's long day
Have men of note their lives passed in review,
And said, as every man of truth must say,
"If I again could live, much better would I do."

How often have they shown mistakes of theirs,
Which they had made when in their youthful days;
Thus warned their hearers, lest they'd not beware,
So, fall into the error of their ways.

How often have these words gone unrecalled,
Till death came staring at the open door;
Then hearts have stood in terror, and, appalled,
Too late repented of the sins of yore.

Bright youth afar from us may long have fled;
Old eyes may be our only guides and charts;
But still another year has softly sped,
And finds us weak, with lowly, contrite hearts.

But now before us lies a snow-white path,
For us to tarnish, trample, blacken as we will;
Oh, give us strength, so when the year has passed,
The road behind shall be the white path still.

—Giles Bishop, Jr., in Boston Budget.

IT WAS the last day of the Old Year. London had recovered from its Christmas festivities—and their after effects—and was preparing to see the New Year in. In the misty hours of the December afternoon, two young men were gazing through the windows of a Piccadilly club at the people who were hurrying up and down that popular thoroughfare.

"Well, Densham," said the younger and darker of the two, "are you meditating any lofty and noble resolutions for the New Year?"

"I am afraid that is not much in my line," replied Lord Densham, in a slightly affected tone. "Why do you ask? Are you going to turn over a new leaf, as our spiritual pastors and masters call it?"

"I've turned over many new leaves," said Cecil Briarley, lightly; "but the same old tales, the same moth-eaten jokes of fate, seem to be written on all of them. No two years are the same, but they are all beastly similar."

"Ah, Briarley, I am thinking of making a great alteration," said Lord Densham, who was evidently in a communicative, though serious, mood.

"Really! Are you going to change your tailor, or only let your mustache grow?"

"Don't be flippant," said his lordship, in quite a melancholy tone. "The fact is, Briarley, old boy, I'm in a hole!"

"You in a hole. It's not money?"

"Of course not—it wouldn't be much use coming to you if it were, would it? No. I'm going to get married." This was drawled out slowly and with a deep sigh, as though the speaker felt he was making some mighty self-sacrifice for the benefit of humanity.

"I thought you looked jolly blue about something; but wherefore the hole?" asked Briarley. "Nobody compels you."

"My dear boy, everybody compels me," said Densham, gazing thoughtfully at his white and well-kept hands and finger nails, and adding, pathetically: "Of course, you don't know what it is to be highly eligible."

"No," replied Briarley, with a grim smile.

"But unfortunately I shall have to marry in self-defense," proceeded his lordship, taking no notice of his friend's remark. "It is sickening to feel that you are being run after by all the girls and all their match-making mammas."

"Poor, poor Densham!" murmured Briarley. "No wonder you are in a hole."

"Yes, but the worst of it is that I've fixed on two girls, and I can't for the life of me decide which of them to have."

"And who are the favored couple between whom Paris the Second has to judge?"

"One is Daisy Molyneux—the lively little thing with the blue eyes and the good figure, you know. Of course, she is very jolly and awfully fond of me—"

"Yes; and the other?"

"The other is Sybil Castlemaine."

"Who?"

"Sybil Castlemaine, your—er—second cousin, isn't she?"

"Good heavens!" muttered Briarley.

"What did you say?"

"Nothing. Do you think Sybil cares for you?"

"I am afraid there is not much doubt of it, old man," said his lordship, mournfully, as he languidly stroked his clean-shaven chin. "I used to fancy you were rather fond of her at one time, but, of course, it is impossible."

"Utterly!"

"Well, look here, old chap, I shouldn't ask everybody, but which of the two girls do you advise me to have?"

"Can't you have both?" asked Cecil, rather savagely.

"Now, come on, old fellow, give me your honest opinion. They're both nice, loving little girls, and it's an awful bore to have to choose. Which would you ask?"

"Well," said Briarley, slowly, and with a bitterness his companion did not appear to see, "it certainly is incredible that any girl could refuse the honor and privilege of being Lady Densham, wearing the Densham diamonds and sharing the Densham celebrity. The only wonder is that you have been permitted to enjoy your liberty for so long. I should advise you to have Daisy Molyneux."

"Not your cousin?"

"No; she would not suit you nearly as well as Miss Molyneux would."

"Thanks, awfully, old chap; I only just needed an impartial opinion like yours to help me to decide. I'll propose to Daisy to-night; she is going to be at Lady Vivyan's dance, and so is Sybil, so I can get it settled either way. Will you be there?"

"Yes, I expect so."

"Right, then I shall see you later."

As Cecil Briarley watched the retreating figure of the wealthy and coroneted friend who was so overburdened with unsought affections, and didn't know which of the two maidens he really loved, he summed up the situation in one word, which he muttered very low, and with heartfelt sincerity. No one heard it, but it is safe to conjecture that it was a syllable of most emphatic disapproval.

Lady Vivyan's rooms presented a gay and brilliant scene that evening. To welcome the new year with dancing and revelry, with music and mirth, was perhaps typical of the giddy social whirl in which hostess and guests revolved in their more or less important positions; but, after all, every day, every hour, start a new year, and it is only sentiment and commercial convenience that settles one particular chime as marking the commencement of another circle.

Lord Densham arrived early. He was attired with his usual care and correctness, and he wore, also, an air of determination that suited him very well. It displaced the appearance of indifference and listlessness which usually make the hereditary legislator look limp and flabby. He speedily discovered that both Daisy Molyneux and Sybil Castlemaine had come, and with a sigh of relief to think that his decision was at last made, he proceeded to seek out Miss Molyneux that he might acquaint her with the honor he proposed to do her.

It was considerably later when Cecil Briarley arrived. He was not in the best of spirits, and did not intend to do much dancing. One of the first persons he noticed was his own cousin.

"What, Sybil—you not dancing?"

"How are you, Cecil? No; I haven't been here long."

"Shall we sit down somewhere until some one comes and claims you?"

"By all means; it is quite a long time since I have had the chance of talking to you, Cecil."

"Have you never heard of Tantalus?" asked her cousin, as he led her to a secluded corner.

"Who was he? An ancient god, wasn't he?" replied Miss Castlemaine. "Was he a relative of Bacchus. The spirit decanters are named after him."

"No," said Cecil, very seriously. "He was a young man who longed for a certain prize, and it was just out of his reach."

"And this is apropos of what?" inquired Sybil.

"Tantalus would have been happier if his prize had been out of his sight as well as out of his reach."

"Why can't you talk like a rational being, Cecil?"

"I only wanted to say that in order to escape the madness of Tantalus, I have been letting my prize go out of sight. They are waltzing very nicely," he added, drawing her attention to one of the couples who were floating near them.

"Lord Densham and Daisy Molyneux?"

"Yes. Densham's a nice fellow, isn't he?"

"Ye-es. I suppose one would hardly call him shy or modest, would one?"

Her merry brown eyes looked up into his, but they didn't find any responsive twinkle.

"He has no need for modesty; he knows his worth."

"Every bit of it!" said Sybil.

"Yes; but when a fellow like that can choose any girl he likes—when he knows they are all like pretty apples asking to be plucked, it is enough to make him conceited."

"And other fellows jealous?" added Sybil, mischievously.

"Yes, and other fellows jealous."

"And I suppose none of the pretty apples can be strong enough to refuse to fall into his hand?"

"It would be a modern miracle if they did."

"Then, perhaps, the age of miracles has not yet gone," said Sybil, nodding gayly to him, as Lady Vivyan came up and introduced a new partner to her.

A little later Briarley was trying to soothe his feelings with a cigarette in the smoking-room when Lord Densham came up to him.

"I say, old chap, a funny thing has happened. She has refused me."

"Who has?"

"Why, Daisy Molyneux."

"By Jove! Were any signs of insanity ever noticed in the family before?" asked Cecil.

"No, I believe not," answered the peer, failing, as usual, to see any sarcasm in the question. "I tried to point out to her what it meant, but she stuck to it. Nice little girl, too."

"Well, I'm awfully sorry, Densham, really I am."

"It doesn't matter so very much; Miss Castlemaine is here, isn't she? You see, I can ask her, and get it settled."

"Of course you can," said Cecil, with a trace of bitterness in his tone.

"I think I'll go and find her. I'm rather sorry I wasted my time over that other silly girl, but it was your advice. Anyway, it makes my choice much easier."

As he walked off Cecil Briarley watched him, and although he was not a man given to the use of bad language it is a lamentable fact that a little word before referred to slipped with terrible earnestness from his lips.

When Lord Densham suggested to Sybil Castlemaine that they should sit the dance out in the conservatory, she saw that he meant to propose to her, and his lordship perceived that, under the circumstances, there was nothing to be gained by beating about the bush, and so he quickly led up to the business he had come to negotiate.

"NOW, TAKE ME, FOR EXAMPLE," HE WENT ON.

"It is rather serious to be standing on the edge of a new year, don't you think so, Miss Castlemaine? It makes one think."

"Really?" said Sybil, arching her pretty eyebrows.

"Yes; one looks at the past and then at the future, you know. Now, take me, for example," he went on, plunging into his carefully prepared and already rehearsed speech. "With money and good connections one can get on very well in life; but that isn't all, upon my word it isn't, Miss Castlemaine. No doubt many fellows would envy what I've got—but, after all, it is very little. There is something more that is wanted, and surely to supply that want would be the fittest way of starting a new year. Dear Miss Castlemaine, I want to be a better man in the future than in the past, and you, only you, can help me. What is needed to make my happiness complete, to crown all my hopes, and perfect my manhood, is a woman's love. Sybil—let me call you Sybil, my love—will you be the woman? Will you marry me?"

In the seclusion of the conservatory he opened his arms a little, as though he expected her to creep in, and he expanded his chest to receive the burden of the dainty little head that was to nestle gently on it. But it was a night of surprises.

"I am very sorry you should have asked me this, Lord Densham," said Sybil, gravely. "I am conscious of the vastness of the compliment, and I am not blind to the advantages and attractions of your offer, but I do not love you."

"You don't love me?" repeated his lordship, in a tone of disappointment that had a suspicion of incredulity in it. "You don't love me? But surely that is only a matter of time; when you have seen more of me, when you know me better, Sybil—"

"My decision would not alter, Lord Densham."

"But you are quite sure—"

"I quite realize what I am losing," said Sybil, calmly, "and although I know how good of you it is to suggest it, I don't really think that I could make you any better or anything but what you are, either in the new year, or at any other time."

"But you could, Miss Castlemaine; you—"

"Would you please take me back? I am engaged for the next dance."

With a wonderful smile on his lips, in which mortification, pity and surprise were blended, he politely offered her his arm and led her back to the ballroom. As they entered it they almost ran into Cecil Briarley. He was about to walk past them when Sybil said:

"Oh, Cecil, here you are! You're just in time."

Densham yielded her up with his customary smile, and Cecil whispered:

"I was not going to claim you for this dance; I thought you would prefer to sit it out with him."

"With him? Why?"

"I—er—I believe he has a question he wants to ask you."

"I don't think he has," said Sybil, quietly.

They were about to join the dancers when it was announced that the mystic midnight moment had almost arrived, and those who cared to do so were to go to the open windows and on the doorsteps and the balconies, to listen and wait for the solemn peal that was to mark the annual recommencement.

Briarley got a wrap to throw over his cousin's shoulders, and then they went to the further corner of the long balcony.

It was a clear, frosty night, and the stars and the moon were shining with a brightness that, reflected in the hoar frost on the grass and trees, illuminated the dark hour with a soft, poetic light. Cecil stood silently by Sybil's side for some seconds, and then he whispered:

"And is the beautiful night making you thoughtful, too?"

"No," said Sybil, with her face turned a little from him. "No, I was thinking of Tantalus."

"Ah, poor Tantalus!" sighed Cecil. "I hope you pity him."

"I don't think I do," responded his cousin, softly, feeling glad that the shadows hid her blushing cheek. "Perhaps his prize was not so far out of reach as he imagined."

Cecil may not have been rich in this world's goods, but he was not poor in imagination.

"Sybil, didn't Densham ask you anything?" he whispered.

"Yes, Cecil, and—and—I performed a modern miracle."

"My darling!" and then there was silence.

"Sybil, you know I am not a rich man, and I am not a lord."

"And you are not horribly conceited and selfish, either, dear."

He did not remove his arm, and a sudden hush of expectancy quieted the chattering party. Nothing was heard for a moment, and then from a dozen clanging clocks all around them boomed forth the solemn chime that announced the birth of the New Year.

One, two, three—ten, 11, 12.

"Sybil," whispered Briarley, "the old tarnished years are gone. Here's to the golden future."—Household Words.

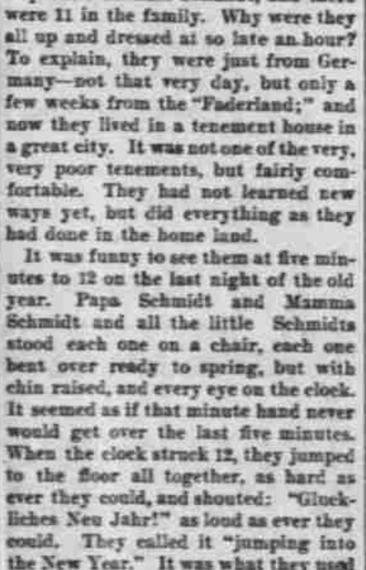
A HARMLESS EARTHQUAKE.

How the Recently Arrived Schmidt Family Ushered in the New Year.

In the St. Nicholas, Helen A. Hawley tells the story of a harmless, unnecessary earthquake. It was five minutes to 12 on the last night of the old year. One would suppose that at five minutes to 12 every small boy and every small girl would be in bed and, what is more, asleep hours ago. Here were Mr. Schmidt and Mrs. Schmidt, who were grown up, so that was well enough; but here were nine little Schmidts, and they were all wide awake at this late hour. Peter Schmidt and Hans Schmidt were twins. There was Greta Schmidt, there was Louise Schmidt—but dear me! It is too much to give all their names. Two pairs of twins make four, and five who weren't twins—four and five make nine little Schmidts. And Papa and Mamma Schmidt, and there were 11 in the family. Why were they all up and dressed at so late an hour? To explain, they were just from Germany—not that very day, but only a few weeks from the "Faderland;" and now they lived in a tenement house in a great city. It was not one of the very, very poor tenements, but fairly comfortable. They had not learned new ways yet, but did everything as they had done in the home land.

It was funny to see them at five minutes to 12 on the last night of the old year. Papa Schmidt and Mamma Schmidt and all the little Schmidts stood each one on a chair, each one bent over ready to spring, but with chin raised, and every eye on the clock. It seemed as if that minute hand never would get over the last five minutes. When the clock struck 12, they jumped to the floor all together, as hard as ever they could, and shouted: "Glückliches Neu Jahr!" as loud as ever they could. They called it "jumping into the New Year." It was what they used to do in Germany. Now, Papa Schmidt and Mamma Schmidt were really heavy, and the little Schmidts were by no means thin. The tenement house, though comfortable, was by no means new, and when they all came down hard it made things shake.

THE WORSE OFF.



"De man dat makes New Year resolutions an' accidentally breaks 'em," said Uncle Eben, "ain't nigh as bad off as de man dat 'magines he doesn't need none."—Washington Star

Cora—"Do you like to hear a girl whistle?" Merritt—"No, but I like the way her mouth looks when she gets ready to try."—Town Topics.

Cora—"Do you like to hear a girl whistle?" Merritt—"No, but I like the way her mouth looks when she gets ready to try."—Town Topics.

Self-respect is the corner stone of all virtue.—Sir John Herschel.

Be your character what it will, it will be known; and nobody will take it upon your word.—Chesterfield.

Women, when cornered, cry, and thus gain time in which to think up a new excuse.—Atchison Globe.

It is only when she is poor and homely that a girl can be sure the man who woos her is really in love.—Chicago Dispatch.

Trust that man in nothing who has not a conscience in everything.—Sterne.

A. N. K.—C 1798